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Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips
US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs
May 9, 2017

NWI Times East Chicago board OKs lead line replacement project
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http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/east-chicago-board-oks-lead-line-replacement-project/article_634c0b1c-f0cd-55d4-be9f-b60e1ee37a6c.html

East Chicago board OKs lead line replacement project

- Sarah Reese sarah.reese@nwi.com, 219-933-3351

EAST CHICAGO — The East Chicago Water Board on Monday approved a \$3.1 million plan to replace lead and galvanized steel water service lines in the USS Lead Superfund site and immediately access about \$1.4 million to fund the project. The city plans to replace the water lines after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has completed Superfund work by removing lead- and arsenic-contaminated soil from around homes or determined no remediation is required, City Engineer William Allen said.

Lines, including customer-owned portions, would be replaced from the city water main to the home's water meter or nearest line inside the home, depending on circumstances at individual homes, Allen said.

Allen told the board he has been in communication with EPA, which identified more than 200 homes in zones 2 and 3 of the Superfund site where it already has removed soil or where no soil removal is required. EPA has said it plans to remove soil at 192 additional homes in the two zones this construction season.

The city plans to run new copper lines using a method called directional boring, which does not require contractors to dig a trench, Allen said.

The city also plans to test drinking water at homes before and after line replacement, he said. The city will be using a three-draw sampling method, which is more robust than the 1-liter first-draw method required under the EPA's Lead and Copper Rule but not as extensive as the sequential testing method EPA was using last year when it found elevated lead levels at 18 homes in the Superfund site.

The Water Board planned to open bids for the line-replacement project at a May 25 meeting.

East Chicago last fall included a plan to replace up to 500 customer-owned lead water lines in a preliminary engineering report submitted to the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission as part of its petition to increase its water rates by 55 percent. Water customers would have had to pay 50 percent of the replacement costs under the initial plan.

In early December, Mayor Anthony Copeland announced EPA had found elevated lead levels of 15 parts per billion or more at 18 homes in the Superfund site. A total of 43 homes were tested as part of a pilot study intended to determine if excavation of soil could cause lead in lines to become dislodged and enter drinking water, EPA said.

Lead in soil and lead in water are not related, but residents exposed to both face greater health risks. From spring 2015 to September 2016, the city — with IDEM'S approval — used a chemical intended to prevent leaching of lead from service lines but is not recommended by experts because it can increase lead releases, records show.

About 9,000 of the city's estimated 11,000 service connections could be lead, according to records on file with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

EPA and city officials have said some estimates are that up to 90 percent of the city's water lines contain lead. If that's correct, all customers should be using certified water filters as a precaution, EPA said. The city is in compliance with EPA's Lead and Copper Rule.

After the EPA sampling results were announced in December, the city and the Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor, which represents ratepayer interests, reached a settlement in the water rate case in which the city agreed to remove the lead-line replacement project from its infrastructure improvement plan. Instead, the city secured \$3.1 million from the Indiana Finance Authority to replace up to 500 lines at 100 percent of the cost and now plans to borrow about \$14 million to fund other infrastructure improvements, state records show.

The Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission on April 26 approved the settlement between the city and the OUCC, and the rate increase went into effect May 5. Customers likely will see the new rates billed in June, said Patricia Bodnar, manager of the East Chicago Water Department. Under the increase, a monthly water bill for a residential customer using 5,000 gallons would rise from \$12.05 to \$18.66.

After the East Chicago City Council approves the larger \$14 million financing deal with the Indiana Finance Authority later this year, the city will be able to access the remainder of the \$3.1 million for the line replacement project, said Joseph Allegretti, the city's corporation counsel.

The city plans to use \$14 million in bond money to build additional water storage tanks, replace and upgrade meters, repair and replace hydrants and demolish its old water filtration plant. The city's newer, \$52 million filtration plant failed after startup in 2011, but as of January was processing most of the city's drinking water, records show.

East Chicago and IDEM officials said they are continuing to test drinking water and working to optimize dosage of chemicals used to prevent release of lead from service lines.

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/opinion/mailbag/pruitt-s-east-chicago-visit-a-disappointment/article_dc21d726-0d9c-5b24-88f5-6fa810be0266.html

Letters to the Editor

Pruitt's East Chicago visit a disappointment

- David Woronecki-Ellis, Hobart
- May 7, 2017

East Chicago faces many pressing environmental issues, none of which were addressed by EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt when he visited on his "Back2Basics" tour recently.

Pruitt was supposed to visit the East Chicago Superfund site, also known as USS Lead, to see firsthand the negative health impacts from exposure to lead and arsenic — two extremely dangerous chemicals.

His brief visit was a disappointment. He missed many opportunities to engage with the community, refused to talk to press and wouldn't engage with stakeholders at the site. His visit was politically motivated and tone deaf to the real issues facing real people here in East Chicago.

It underscored exactly where his priorities lie.

If Pruitt's visit demonstrated anything, it's that he is not committed, nor will his agency be adequately funded, to address these threats facing East Chicago.

David Woronecki-Ellis, Hobart

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/epas-pruitt-lawmakers-recommit-to-public-trust-in-east-chicago/article/2622262>

EPA's Pruitt, lawmakers recommit to public trust in East Chicago

by [John Siciliano](#) | [May 5, 2017, 3:04 PM](#)

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt on Friday joined Democrats and Republicans to reaffirm the agency's commitment to communities outside of Chicago hit by high levels of lead contamination.

Pruitt had visited the Indiana city of East Chicago last month affected by contamination from a closed lead production facility owned by the firm U.S. Steel that had been designated a Superfund cleanup site by the agency in 2009.

"The recent meeting in East Chicago signals our renewed commitment to restore public trust by improving communication and coordination and delivering real solutions for protecting health and public safety in the community, especially for the families impacted by the closure of West Calumet Housing Complex," read a joint statement by Pruitt and Democratic and Republican lawmakers, as well as Republican Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb.

Last year, residents in the city had to be evacuated from their homes due to high levels of lead in the water supply and soil. Pruitt had made visiting the city a top priority in a tour of the nation in April to promote the EPA's refocus on clean water and clean air.

Critics had underscored proposed cuts to the EPA budget as a serious problem in managing the cleanup effort, although Pruitt has fought those characterizations. The Trump budget blueprint calls for deep cuts at the agency across a number of programs.

"The painful personal stories of East Chicago residents will guide us as we chart a new path forward, and we are extremely grateful to each person who bravely shared their comments," according to the statement, signed by Sens. Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., and Todd Young, R-Ind., as well as Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Ind., and East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland.

EPA and Indiana environmental regulators "will continue efforts to remediate the Superfund site and work to ensure safe drinking water is provided through the city's public water system," the joint statement explained. "In addition, officials remain committed to investigating the sources, size, and scope of the lead contamination, as well as informing the public and quickly implementing remedies, if necessary, to ensure the residents of East Chicago have access to safe drinking water."

The actions are coupled with new state legislation that directs water testing in the city, coupled with a law requiring a plan by the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission on how soon to expect lead drinking water pipes to be replaced.

"We will continue moving forward together until the job is done. Residents deserve nothing less," the letter read.

<http://lakeshorepublicradio.org/post/east-chicago-residents-worried-about-everything-despite-progress>

East Chicago Residents 'Worried About Everything' Despite Progress

By Nick Janzen • May 5, 2017

Keesha Daniels just moved from one lead contaminated neighborhood to another.

Both her new house and her old West Calumet Housing Complex apartment sit within East Chicago's USS Lead Superfund site. The city is tearing down her old home because of extremely high levels of lead in the soil. So she had to move.

Daniels is still unpacking. Most rooms have a pile of boxes stacked tidily in a corner. Two heavy dressers sit in one otherwise empty room — her sons are coming later to move them. As Daniels takes me on a tour of her new house, she offers me some water.

"It's bottled water," she says with a laugh. A water filter hangs pointedly from her kitchen faucet.

Despite progress at the state and federal levels, many East Chicago residents, such as Daniels, are frustrated with the public officials in charge of cleaning up the lead contaminated neighborhood.

The Environmental Protection Agency told Daniels and her sons that her new front yard is lead free. The government offered to move the family off the superfund site, to Chicago, but Daniels didn't like that option.

"I'm still worried about everything; we're still doing the bottled water a lot," Daniels says. "I just feel safer in East Chicago. I was born and raised here, so I've been here 40 plus years, so I'm kind of nervous about going some place else."

Like Daniels, most West Calumet residents have moved now. That's Zone 1 of the Superfund, it tested for the highest lead levels. But she also says residents in the other two zones have a lot left to fight for, even though they aren't being relocated.

"So now, the struggle still continues, because I still have family in [Zone] 2 and I live in [Zone] 3," says Daniels. "It's not going to stop just because I moved out of Zone 1."

Daniels really hasn't stopped. In the past month she's had her bones tested for lead (she doesn't know results yet), she traveled to Washington, D.C. to advocate for lead-free housing, and she met with state leaders and EPA Chief Scott Pruitt.

Taylor's yard, running down the side of her house, laid in disarray that day. Bushes and mounds of dirt surround the excavator, which digs out contaminated soil and replaces it with clean soil.

"So today's my day to get dug up," Taylor says. "See they even brought a whole machine in here, I didn't even notice that."

A letter sent to her by the EPA explains that sampling results from her yard showed lead or arsenic concentrations above the limit the federal government considers safe.

Taylor says she's grateful her yard is being remediated, but she's far from satisfied. She says more crews are needed to do the work faster.

While residents who met with Pruitt that day say officials didn't relay specific plans for the future, it does sound like Taylor's wish might come true.

Speaking with reporters after Pruitt's press conference – Pruitt only gave a brief statement; no questions – Regional EPA Administrator Robert Kaplan said they would be doing more work, faster.

"So the most important aspect is getting out into the field earlier, and that's what we did, and committing to more residents being done, and that's what we did as well," says Kaplan.

Officials are continuing to make progress:

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- Most recently, the city reached an agreement with the state to begin replacing lead drinking water pipes.
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- Gov. Eric Holcomb issued an emergency declaration for the city.
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- State lawmakers appropriated money for more water and soil testing within the Superfund site.

On the other hand, an investigation by the Northwest Indiana Times found evidence that there's lead paint dust surrounding homes reserved for people moving out of lead contaminated Zone 1.

Both Keesha Daniels and Tyra Taylor say the Calumet neighborhood used to be a tight-knit community. But they feel isolated now, like their lives have been turned upside down. Daniels says \$1,000 and a Section 8 voucher aren't enough to replace family.

And Taylor says she continues to be frustrated because residents have to deal with lead contamination every hour of every day, and they've been doing it for decades.

"You know, they're having meetings and people coming in from out of town, senators, you know, whatever — that's fine," Taylor says. "But then you go on, you have to go back to the rest of what's on your desk. You know, we are just in a pile. We are a pile of paperwork."

Sincerely,

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